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From The Morning Call -- June 12, 2004

## Lawmakers, PennDOT to discuss sinkhole-affected Rt. 33 bridges

But officials won't say specifically what's on Monday's agenda.

By Joe Nixon  
Of The Morning Call

Area lawmakers will meet with state Department of Transportation officials in Harrisburg on Monday to discuss the northbound and southbound Route 33 bridges over the Bushkill Creek in Palmer Township.

PennDOT press secretary Rich Kirkpatrick said Friday that the meeting will focus on "the issue of these bridges," but he would not elaborate.

The old northbound bridge over the creek was closed Jan. 24 when a sinkhole opened on the south bank of the creek, causing the bridge to sink 6 inches. That bridge was dismantled and a new bridge is under construction. It is expected to open this summer.

In the meantime, northbound drivers are using a temporary crossover and one lane on the nearby southbound bridge. The abutments of the new northbound bridge were anchored in bedrock to prevent sinkhole damage.

The new northbound bridge cost an estimated \$6 million, and about 90 percent of that bill is being paid by the federal government. Work on the new northbound span was temporarily halted in March after crews drilled 144 feet without hitting solid rock. New equipment was brought and crews eventually hit rock 250 feet down.

State Rep. Richard Grucela, D-Northampton, said he and other area lawmakers were called meeting Monday in Harrisburg, but said details were not disclosed. State Sen. Lisa Boscola, Northampton, also said she could not say anything definitive about the meeting and also had detailed information.

"It's got to be something extremely important," Boscola said, adding she felt that with the history of sinkholes in the area, the meeting may deal with what to do about the southbound bridge, although she said she had no information to suggest that bridge is not safe. "I would be surprised if it dealt with the southbound bridge," she said.

Grucela said he intends to ask Monday about the status of a smaller nearby bridge, the Bushkill Creek bridge at the Palmer Township-Stockertown border that was damaged by sinkholes in October 2000 and remains partially collapsed.

"I want to know what they are going to do about that," he said. "That is still a problem. The

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Morning Call reporter [Dan Hartzell](#).

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